

CHAPTER 1.3.4.

GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION OF
VETERINARY SERVICES

Article 1.3.4.1.

General considerations

1. Evaluation of *Veterinary Services* is an important element in the risk analysis process which countries may legitimately use in their policy formulations directly applying to animal health and sanitary controls of *international trade in animals*, animal-derived products, animal genetic material and animal feedstuffs.

Any evaluation should be carried out with due regard for Chapter 1.3.3. of this *Terrestrial Code*.

2. In order to ensure that objectivity is maximised in the evaluation process, it is essential for some standards of discipline to be applied. The OIE has developed these guidelines which can be practically applied to the evaluation of *Veterinary Services*. These are relevant for evaluation of the *Veterinary Services* of one country by those of another country for the purposes of risk analysis in *international trade*. These guidelines (in conjunction with the Performance, Vision, Strategy [PVS] Instrument) will be used by OIE experts when conducting an evaluation on the request of a Member Country. The guidelines are also applicable for evaluation by a country of its own *Veterinary Services* – the process known as self-evaluation ~~or self assessment~~ – and for periodic re-evaluation. These guidelines should be used by OIE experts when facilitating an evaluation under the auspices of the OIE, following a request of a Member Country. In applying these guidelines for the evaluation, the Performance, Vision and Strategy [PVS] Instrument should be used.

In carrying out a risk analysis prior to deciding the sanitary/zoosanitary conditions for the importation of a *commodity*, an *importing country* is justified in regarding its evaluation of the *Veterinary Services* of the *exporting country* as critical.

3. The purpose of evaluation may be either to assist a national authority in the decision-making process regarding priorities to be given to its own *Veterinary Services* (self-evaluation) or to assist the process of risk analysis in *international trade in animals* and animal-derived products to which official sanitary and/or zoosanitary controls apply.

4. In both situations, the evaluation should demonstrate that the *Veterinary Services* have the capability for effective control of the sanitary and zoosanitary status of *animals* and animal products. Key elements to be covered in this process include resource adequacy, management capability, legislative and administrative infrastructures, independence in the exercise of official functions and performance history, including disease reporting.
5. Competence and integrity are qualities on which others base their confidence in individuals or organisations. Mutual confidence between relevant official *Veterinary Services* of trading partner countries contributes fundamentally to stability in *international trade* in *animals* and animal-related products. In this situation, scrutiny is directed more at the *exporting country* than at the *importing country*.
6. Although quantitative data can be provided on *Veterinary Services*, the ultimate evaluation will be essentially qualitative. While it is appropriate to evaluate resources and infrastructure (organisational, administrative and legislative), it is also appropriate to place emphasis on the evaluation of the quality of outputs and performance of *Veterinary Services*. Evaluation should take into consideration any quality systems used by *Veterinary Services*.
7. An *importing country* has a right of assurance that information on sanitary/zoosanitary situations provided by the *Veterinary Services* of an *exporting country* is objective, meaningful and correct. Furthermore, the *Veterinary Services* of the *importing country* are entitled to expect validity in the veterinary certification of export.
8. An *exporting country* is entitled to expect that its *animals* and animal products will receive reasonable and valid treatment when they are subjected to import inspection in the country of destination. The country should also be able to expect that any evaluation of its standards and performance will be conducted on a non-discriminatory basis. The *importing country* should be prepared and able to defend any position which it takes as a consequence of the evaluation.
9. As the *Veterinary statutory body* is not a part of the *Veterinary Services*, an evaluation of that body should be carried out to ensure that the registration/licensing of *veterinarians* and authorisation of *veterinary para-professionals* is included.

Article 1.3.4.2.

Scope

1. In the evaluation of *Veterinary Services*, the following items may be considered, depending on the purpose of the evaluation:

- organisation, structure and authority of the *Veterinary Services*;
 - human resources;
 - material (including financial) resources;
 - functional capabilities and legislative support;
 - animal health and veterinary public health controls;
 - formal quality systems including quality policy;
 - performance assessment and audit programmes;
 - participation in OIE activities and compliance with OIE Member Countries' obligations.
2. To complement the evaluation of *Veterinary Services*, ~~it is necessary to also consider~~ the organisational structure and functioning of the *Veterinary statutory body* should also be considered.
3. Article 1.3.4.14. outlines appropriate information requirements for:
- self-evaluation by national *Veterinary Services* which perceive a need to prepare information for national or international purposes;
 - evaluation by a prospective or actual *importing country* of the *Veterinary Services* of a prospective or actual *exporting country*;
 - verification or re-verification of an evaluation in the course of a visit to the *exporting country* by the *importing country*;
 - evaluation by third parties such as OIE experts or regional organisations.

~~4. The PVS Instrument should be used as a guide in conducting evaluations and self evaluations.~~

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Article 1.3.4.9.

Veterinary public health controls

1. Food hygiene

The national *Veterinary Services* should be able to demonstrate effective responsibility for the veterinary public health programmes relating to the production and processing of

animal products. If the national *Veterinary Services* do not exercise responsibility over these programmes, the evaluation should include a comprehensive review of the role and relationship of the organisations (national, state/provincial, and municipal) which are involved. In such a case, the evaluation should consider whether the national *Veterinary Services* can provide guarantees of responsibility for an effective control of the sanitary status of animal products throughout the slaughter, processing, transport and storage periods.

2. Zoonoses

Within the structure of *Veterinary Services*, there should be appropriately qualified personnel whose responsibilities *include* the monitoring and control of zoonotic diseases and, where appropriate, liaison with medical authorities.

3. Chemical residue testing programmes

Adequacy of controls over chemical residues in exported *animals*, animal products and feedstuffs should be demonstrated. Statistically-based surveillance and monitoring programmes for environmental and other chemical contaminants in *animals*, in animal-derived foodstuffs and in animal feedstuffs should be favourably noted. These programmes should be coordinated nationwide.

Correlated results should be freely available on request to existing and prospective trading partner countries. Analytical methods and result reporting should be consistent with internationally recognised standards. If official responsibility for these programmes does not rest with the *Veterinary Services*, there should be appropriate provision to ensure that the results of such programmes are made available to the *Veterinary Services* for assessment. This process should be consistent with the standards set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission or with alternative requirements set by the importing country where the latter are scientifically justified.

4. Veterinary medicines

It should be acknowledged that primary control over veterinary medicinal products may not rest with the *Veterinary Authorities* in some countries, owing to differences between governments in the division of legislative responsibilities. However, for the purpose of evaluation, the *Veterinary Services* should be able to demonstrate the existence of effective controls (including nationwide consistency of application) over the manufacture, importation, export, registration, supply, sale and use of veterinary medicines, biologicals and diagnostic reagents, whatever their origin. The control of veterinary medicines has direct relevance to the areas of animal health and public health.

In the animal health sphere, this has particular application to biological products. Inadequate controls on the registration and use of biological products leave the *Veterinary Services* open to challenge over the quality of animal disease control programmes and over safeguards against animal disease introduction in imported veterinary biological products.

It is valid, for evaluation purposes, to seek assurances of effective government controls over veterinary medicines in so far as these relate to the public health risks associated with residues of these chemicals in *animals* and animal-derived foodstuffs. This process should be consistent with the standards set by the Codex Alimentarius Commission or with alternative requirements set by the *importing country* where the latter are scientifically justified.

5. Integration between animal health controls and veterinary public health

The existence of any organised programme which incorporates a structured system of information feedback from inspection in establishments producing products of animal origin, in particular meat or dairy products, and applies this in animal health control should be favourably noted. Such programmes should be integrated within a national disease surveillance scheme.

Veterinary Services which direct a significant element of their animal health programmes specifically towards minimising microbial and chemical contamination of animal-derived products in the human food chain should receive favourable recognition in the evaluation. There should be evident linkage between these programmes and the official control of veterinary medicines and relevant agricultural chemicals.

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Article 1.3.4.12.

Evaluation of the veterinary statutory body

1. Scope

In the evaluation of the *veterinary statutory body*, the following items may be considered, depending on the purpose of the evaluation:

- objectives and functions;
- legislative basis, ~~including~~ autonomy and functional capacity;
- ~~human resources, including~~ the composition and representation of the body's membership;
- ~~institutional arrangements;~~ accountability and transparency of decision-making;

- sources and management of funding;
- ~~functional capabilities, including the ability to enforce its decisions (for example regarding registration requirements, standards of conduct, and disciplinary procedures);~~
- administration of ~~education~~ training programmes and continuing professional development for *veterinarians* and *veterinary para-professionals*.

2. Evaluation of objectives and functions

The *veterinary statutory body* should define its policy and objectives, including detailed descriptions of its powers and functions such as:

- to regulate *veterinarians* and *veterinary para-professionals* through licensing and/or registration of such persons;
- to determine the minimum standards of **training education (initial and continuing)** required for degrees, diplomas and certificates entitling the holders thereof to be registered as *veterinarians* and *veterinary para-professionals*;
- to determine the standards of professional conduct of *veterinarians* and *veterinary para-professionals* and to ensure these standards are met.

3. Evaluation of legislative basis, autonomy and functional capacity

The *veterinary statutory body* should be able to demonstrate that it has the capacity, supported by appropriate legislation, to exercise and enforce control over all *veterinarians* and *veterinary para-professionals*. These controls should include, where appropriate, compulsory licensing and registration, minimum standards of **training education (initial and continuing)** for the recognition of degrees, diplomas and certificates, setting standards of professional conduct and exercising control and the application of disciplinary procedures.

The *veterinary statutory body* should be able to demonstrate autonomy from undue political and commercial interests.

Where applicable, regional agreements for the recognition of degrees, diplomas and certificates for *veterinarians* and *veterinary para-professionals* should be demonstrated.

4. Evaluation of membership representation

Detailed descriptions should be available in respect of the membership of the *veterinary statutory body* and the method and duration of appointment of members. Such information includes:

- *veterinarians* designated by the *Veterinary Administration*, such as the Chief Veterinary Officer;

- = veterinarians elected by members registered by the *veterinary statutory body*;
- = veterinarians designated or nominated by the veterinary association(s);
- = representative(s) of veterinary para-professions;
- = representative(s) of veterinary academia;
- = representative(s) of other stakeholders from the private sector;
- = election procedures and duration of appointment;
- = qualification requirements for members.

5. Evaluation of accountability and transparency of decision-making

Detailed information should be available on disciplinary procedures regarding the conducting of enquiries into professional misconduct, transparency of decision-making, publication of findings, sentences and mechanisms for appeal.

Additional information regarding the publication at regular intervals of activity reports, lists of registered or licensed persons including deletions and additions should also be taken into consideration.

6. Evaluation of financial sources and financial management

Information regarding income and expenditure, including fee structure(s) for the licensing/registration of persons should be available.

7. Evaluation of training programmes and programmes for continuing professional development, for *veterinarians* and *veterinary para-professionals*

Descriptive summary of continuing professional development, training and education programmes should be provided, including descriptions of content, duration and participants; documented details of quality manuals and standards relating to Good Veterinary Practice should be provided.

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